DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 202 RC 017 258

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TITLE Mainstreaming the Hearing-Impaired Student in the College Classroom: A Comprehensive Approach.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 13p.; In: Education and the Changing Rural Community: Anticipating the 21st Century. Proceedings of the 1989 ACRES/NRSSC Symposium. See RC 017 257.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; *Education Work Relationship; *Hearing Impairments; Higher Education; *Holistic Approach; Learning Problems; *Mainstreaming; Normalization (Handicapped); Small Colleges; Special Programs; Transitional Programs; Two Year Colleges; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *North Florida Junior College

ABSTRACT

This paper examines characteristics of the hearing-impaired related to educational and employment potential and the college programs available to prepare them for employment. The deaf adult population suffers from unemployment caused by inadequacies in education and a host of non-educational factors, such as inadequate social adjustment, poor public image, and poor social services. The problem is exacerbated by a changing national socioeconomic landscape. By the time students reach the postsecondary level, a number of contributing factors have shaped their potential for success. Institutions that assess students total needs, as opposed to focusing on a few particular practices or skills, are best able to prepare deaf adults for independent living. Today, there are about 150 colleges and universities providing services to hearing-impaired students. Significant characteristics of a successful college mainstreaming program include curriculum, support services, quality staff, funding, an appropriate student population, and commitment from the administration. The curriculum for the hearing-impaired at North Florida Junior College is discussed at length. This institution offers a summer preparatory program, vocational education with an on-the-job training component, academic degree programs, and a support services program including courses in independent living skills. This paper suggests quality programs using a comprehensive, holistic approach can successfully prepare hearing-impaired students for the world of work. (TES)

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ED315202

MAINSTREAMING THE HEARING-IMPAIRED STUDENT IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Introduction

If one were to examine the deaf adult population today and describe its economic status in a single term, it could be labeled as "underemployment". (Jacobs, 1980). According to Jacobs there are several possible causes for this including:

1. Inadequate education
2. Inadequate social adjustment
3. A poor public image
4. Poor service by programs that should serve the adult deaf
5. Isolation of deaf adults (pp. 103-104)

These factors coupled with the changes in technology in today's world of work have created vocational barriers for the unprepared, undereducated, deaf adult.

Since 1965 over 6,000 new types of jobs have been created and over 8,000 that existed before then are currently extinct. In addition, educational requirements for employment are increasing and there has been a shift from manual, semi-skilled, and unskilled jobs to more white-collared jobs. (Mindel & Vernon, 1971.) Today's high school graduates are faced with the task of securing additional training or facing a grim vocational future.

In a recent article published in the Journal of the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, Martin presents some startling facts. He states:

> We know that in the hearing population, of the people who are one year out of high school, more than 82% have a job. Only about 15% are not employed. However, in the hearing-impaired population only a little more than one-half are in what we call the "work force", and only half of that group have regular steady employment. (p. 36.)

Education is not the sole factor contributing to underemployment. Those individuals completing training programs who are qualified for competitive employment often find themselves working in areas where little or no education is required. Others may be hired within their field only to find that they soon reach their vocational plateau and additional promotions are not forthcoming. This issue was one of the topics of discussion in a study conducted by Schein and Delk in 1974. In The Deaf Population of the United States they provided the public

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with statistics pertaining to education and employability of deaf adults. Their research supported the fact that although educated deaf individuals enter the work force several of them are never given the opportunity to explore their range of abilities.

> For example, almost 43 percent of deaf adults who have completed 13 years or more of school (i.e., have one or more years of higher education) have principal occupations in the following categories: clerical, transit and nontransit operatives, farm and nonfarm laborers, and service and household workers. Underemployment certainly describes many of these job placements, though not necessarily all. Of those who completed one or more years of secondary education, 6% are employed as laborers. (p. 85.)

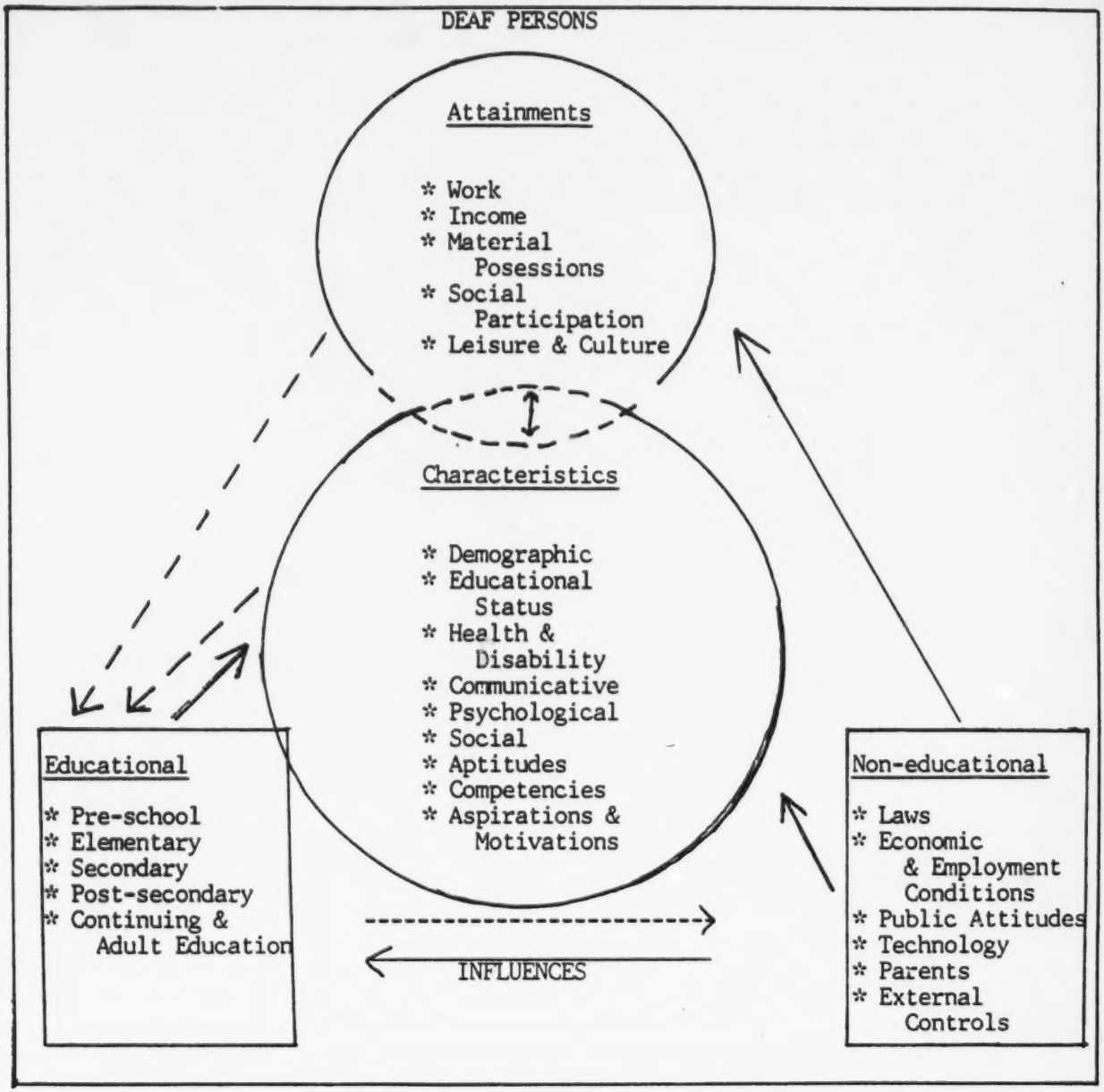
Although Schein & Delk's publication was produced fourteen years ago more recent surveys tend to reflect similar findings. Those individuals who had earned a college degree were able to find employment in professionally related occupations. However, once placed in their field of work achieving upward mobility was often hampered. This has been partially attributed to their entering occupational areas which do not foster career enhancement or because of the fact that individuals enter careers much closer to their maximum professional potential thus limiting their opportunity for additional advancement. (Welsh & Walker, 1988.)

What are the characteristics of this population and what types of training are available to prepare them for possible employment in today's society? In the next two sections both issues will be examined and components of a model post-secondary program will be identified and defined.

Attributes of Deafness Which Influence Success in Education

Educators of the deaf agree that several factors contribute to the success or failure of the student in the college classroom. Physical attributes include type and degree of loss, age of onset, and secondary handicapping conditions. Additionally, one's family and economic background, previous educational experience and social encounters all impact on the development of the individual. Although deafness and the ramifications of the disability provide a springboard for identifying this population, the unique characteristics of each individual are critical in regard to potential success in an educational program.

The concept of factors influencing one's success in the educational arena has been illustrated succinctly in a model developed by Stuckless, Clarq, and DeCaro (Stuckless, et.al., 1985.). In an article describing educational and noneducational influences on the attainments of deaf persons, they focus on those components which contribute to the development of the individual. Their premise states that although education empacts on an individual's development those influences which are of an educational nature may have an even more significant impact on one's development. (p. 208.)



Model 1 (p. 208)

_____ solid lines indicate these factors directly affect characteristics of deaf people

---------- dotted lines indicate the educational impact on non-educational characteristics are not as strong as the non-educational components

By the time a student reaches the post-secondary level he has been shaped by a number of contributing factors. He will enter the classroom with a realm of background experiences and preconceived ideas of what he hopes to gain from the college experience. Deaf persons are as unique as their hearing counterparts. Similarly, their life experiences and their rate of maturation influence the level at which they will enter the educational environment.

In order for post-secondary institutions to prepare deaf individuals to live independantly and secure vocational placements within our hearing society programs must be established and/or enhanced to provide for the holistic development of the individual. Far too often in the past a particular trade or skill has been emphasized with little regard for the students socio-educational development upon entering the program. More attention must be given to assessing the total needs of the student in order for the individual to graduate from his or her program having developed those characteristics which will foster independence.

Post-secondary Programs for the Hearing Impaired in the United States

Until fairly recently deaf students had very limited opportunities to acquire a post-secondary education. If they did well academically in secondary school they had the option of attending Gallaudet University, the only Liberal Arts university in the world for the deaf, or the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Within the last several years, many post-secondary programs have been providing services to deaf students therefore enabling more of them to obtain a college education. Today there are approximately 150 colleges and universities providing programming for hearing impaired students. (Rawlings, et.al., 1988.) Depending on whether the student selects a college with an exclusive deaf enrollment, or one in which he will be mainstreamed with hearing students will determine the various challenges he will encounter.

Because the focus of this paper relates to the post-secondary hearing impaired students mainstreamed on a hearing campus, only those issues pertaining to that specific type of educational environment will be addressed.

When a deaf individual decides to attend a hearing college it may be his first real contact with the hearing world. The standards for behavior that were accepted previously in schools for the deaf may be viewed as immature by post-secondary hearing standards.

Generally speaking, the deaf college student will enter the college environment educationally deprived. Due to the lags in educational development he will enter college functioning at a lower achievement level. His potential may be average or above but his attainment lower. This educational lag will encumber the deaf college student's progress through school.

> The most salient characteristic of low-achieving deaf persons is the overwhelming majority with normal potential...They represent a failure of education and other services and are testimony to a waste of human resources.

> It is obvious that the deaf person faces the world with an educational handicap that is a greater disability than his deafness. (Vernon, p. 258.)

Oftentimes the educational handicap is interpreted by the deaf individual to mean "dumb" or "stupid". He may feel very inadequate when interacting in the classroom and, therefore, withdraw from his peers, further isolating himself. On the other hand, he may release his frustration on those around him, affecting a mode of aggression causing others to withdraw from him--thus isolation also occurs.

Within the confines of a hearing educational setting the deaf individual may experience feelings of inadequacy, the stigma of being different, and his own frustrations of dealing with the new educational setting. If he is unsure of himself and what he is able to accomplish he will not be able to look beyond himself.

In an article published by the American Annals of the Deaf entitled "Dimensions of Mainstreaming" Kathryn Opton supports the above premise. She states that success may not occur solely by placing a student in a mainstreamed environment with resources and support services. She continues by emphasizing the need for the program to enhance all aspects of the individuals educational experience. (Opton, 1986.)

Within her naturalistic study she formulated three hypotheses pertaining to hearing impaired students participating in a post-secondary setting. In essence she states that:

1: the participation of hearing impaired students in the regular classroom may be impeded by the transmission of communication thus isolating hearing impaired students from group interaction.
2: the ability of hearing and hearing impaired students to relate to each other is dependent on them becoming comfortable with each others presence.
3: mainstreaming can be successful when hearing impaired students can accomplish required class assignments, utilize support services, and find acceptance of hearing students and classroom instructors. (pp. 327-329)

In order for the hearing impaired students to enter the domain of the post-secondary hearing campus and be successful, he must be able to acknowledge any personal educational lags, accept support services, and be provided with a training program which encompasses all aspects of educational and independent living skills.

What are the characteristics of a sound mainstreamed program? What elements need to be included to provide today's hearing impaired students with employment skills? The next section will focus on these issues.

Characteristics of Post-secondary Programs for the Hearing Impaired

As noted above, mainstreaming hearing impaired students is still a relatively recent concept. In 1961 Riverside City College, Riverside, California was the first two-year college to establish a program for deaf students. By 1968 three major new programs were created and by the

early 70's, 22 were in existence. The growth trend has continued and today throughout the United States there are approximately 150 such programs. (Stuckless, 1973)

Administrators and educators associated with these programs generally concur that certain elements are essential in maintaining a successfully mainstreamed program. Those characteristics deemed significant are:

1. Curriculum
2. Support Services
3. Personnel
4. Funding
5. Student Population
6. Commitment of Administration to the Program

In addition to these components, other elements pertaining to the overall development of the student must be incorporated in order to prepare the hearing impaired individual for competive employment, or advanced training when he graduates from the institution.

North Florida Junior College has established a model program for hearing-impaired students. Although the program is relatively young, it is comprehensive in design and utilizes a holistic approach to education. By examining the characteristics listed above and exploring the unique features of this program, one can gain insight as to how hearing-impaired students can be successfully mainstreamed in small rural junior colleges. In the pages which follow these components will be discussed in depth.

Providing Quality Programming in Rural Colleges for Mainstreamed Hearing-Impaired Students

Geographic Location

One distinguishing characteristic of small rural colleges is the size of the campus and the geographic location. Due to the size factor students entering these campuses tend to establish a more personal rapport with the faculty and administrators and are viewed as an "individual" rather than a "number". Those students requiring individualized instruction or special services are quickly identified and the transition between their high school setting and the college campus occurs within a short period of time.

This dimension of the program is particularly beneficial for hearing-impaired students. As noted before, deaf students entering college come from as diverse backgrounds as hearing students. However, for those students who received the majority of their educational training in a residential school for the deaf, this may be their first academic encounter with hearing peers. As a result it is of paramount importance for many of them to be identified as an individual from the onset of their post-secondary training. Those hearing-impaired individuals registering in larger universities stand a greater chance of becoming identified by a number and can become lost in the system early in the process.

Research reflects that residential schools for the deaf have a tendency to breed dependency. As a result, deaf students entering college for the first time may encounter a greater degree of success if they enroll in a small institution which can accomodate them as they strive for more independence.

Based on the same premise, geographic location of the small college can be a positive attribute for this population. Again, those students who have resided in a residential facility may be living independently in the community for the first time. Many families and students alike are faced with concerns revolving around the independent living aspects that college life affords. By placing students in a "small town atmosphere", they have heightened opportunities to explore their surroundings without being swallowed by the magnitude of the metropolitan area.

It is important to emphasize that size and location of the campus play an integral part in enhancing a program of this nature.

Curriculum

The curriculum provided by an institution is of vital importance to anyone involved in education. Preparing individuals to live fulfilled and independent lives is at the core of educational development. Within this section the curriculum at North Florida Junior College will be discussed by viewing four different components: the Summer Preparatory Program, Vocational Education, Academic Degree Programs and Developmental Course Work.

Summer Preparatory Program

Summer Prep Programs are not uncommon among colleges which host hearing-impaired programs. Emphasis is often placed on general orientation, testing, developmental work, and recreational activities. North Florida Junior College recognizes this need and incorporates these elements into their program. In addition, the summer program has been expanded to maximize on community involvement. The premise for this lies in the desire to acquaint the students with the community and have professionals and businessmen become familiar with the students from the onset of their arrival. Students are taken to the various businesses and social service agencies where they become familiar with their location and function. This is one of the first steps toward providing them with independent living skills. This involvement with the community continues through the duration of the program. The same businesses and social service agencies are later used for On the Job Training sites and later as potential employment sites. Because this program does not have dormitory facilities the students are housed in apartments. As a result, within the three week training period the students are provided with additional instruction in:

Money management
Basic first aid
Cooking skills
Utilizing support services

Consumerism
Legal rights and responsibilities
Sexuality
Apartment know-how

By capitalizing on the resources in a small, rural community and integrating the students into the framework of daily activities, that core of skills so vital to independent living can begin to be enhanced.

Vocational Education

Within the Vocational area North Florida Junior College offers training opportunities in six areas. They are as follows: automotive, cosmotology, drafting, masonry, building maintenance technology, and office technology. Hearing-impaired students may enroll in one of four of these six areas. Students do not enroll in the auromotive repair or the cosmotology areas as job placement upon the completion of these degrees is relatively slim. Students do compete succesfully in the remaining four areas.

Drafting

The drafting department provides training in three specialized areas; architectural, civil, and machine drafting. Students are mainstreamed into the classroom and compete with their hearing peers. They may enroll in this program for three years and cover all aspects of drafting.

Masonry

This one year program prepares the student for employment as brick layers' helpers. The class primarily consists of hearing students. Hearing-impaired students participate fully and oftentimes compete in state and national VICA competitions.

Building Maintenance Tecnology and Office Technology

These two programs consist entirely of hearing-impaired students. The classes function as self-contained classes for deaf students on a hearing campus. As a result, these students do not face many of the frustrations which are encountered by mainstreamed college students.

Although interpreters are provided for all of the vocational classes, many of the instructors develop a certain level of competency within the area of manual communication therefore establishing a good rapport with the students.

Class size averages fifteen students which affords those enrolled in the class with the opportunity to receive individual instruction.

On the Job Training

An integral part of the vocational education program lies in the area of On the Job Training. Both first and second year students

receive the opportunity to work in the community. OJT experiences are designed as realistically as possible to introduce the student to the world of work. Within the Office Technology program, second year, second semester students receive a half day of training five days a week in the community. This provides an excellent transition into the work force.

Academic Degree Programs

In the fall of 1988, NFJC opened its doors to those hearing-impaired students wishing to pursue an Associate of Arts degree. Based on the ramifications of deafness and the often educational lags in the academic area a special three plus two program was designed.

Students wishing to enter the A.A. degree program begin by enrolling in a year of developmental course work. Upon raising their scores to the academic level they then enter the traditional college level classes.

Because North Florida is located in a rural area and many of the hearing students are impoverished academically, they also enroll in the developmental classes. This in itself helps to alleviate the stigma that only deaf individuals need developmental course work.

By providing students with the option of selecting an academic or a vocational tract they have the flexibility of changing majors within the same institution. This is a real advantage for a vocational office tech student who is doing exceptionally well and decides to switch to a more academic degree in business education. It works equally well for the student who feels he wants to pursue an A.A. degree only to find that the course content is too difficult. By providing a comprehensive selection students can move within the system without changing institutions. This is especially helpful for the hearing-impaired student who may be unsure of his career aspirations.

Developmental Course Work

There are two types of developmental courses at NFJC. Those students pursuing an A.A. degree enroll in developmental courses with an academic focus. However, students in the vocational area enter developmental courses which will provide them survival skills. Within the vocational area students enroll in: developmental English, reading, math, and employability skills. Although all of the class objectives are related to preparing the students for daily living, the classes in English and employability skills merit particular attention.

Vocational Developmental English

This class is taught by a teacher of the deaf in an ASL format, familiarizing the students with their own native language and then teaching them how to transfer it into standard written English. Because the majority of prelingually deaf individuals utilize ASL as their native language the theory is that these students will be able to enhance their English writing skills by first understanding the grammar and syntax of their own language. Through a series of modules and video

taped signed story presentations the students begin to write in a more traditional English fashion. The goal of the course is to provide the students with the written English skills required to communicate their needs to the hearing public.

Employability Skill Training

During the last semester of their vocational training students enroll in an employability skills class. This course focuses on writing resumes, job interviewing techniques, job expectations and the art of maintaining employment once it has been secured. Structured within the class are actual interviews with potential employers and campus administrators. Interviews are video taped and the students receive feedback on their performance. By the conclusion of the class students have a resume to send to potential employers and they have gone through the mechanics of a job interview.

Support Services

Inherent in any mainstreamed program is the need for qualified personnel. The support team consists of interpreters, tutors, notetakers, counselors, and personnel who can help foster personal and social growth on the part of the students.

NFJC provides all of these support services. In addition, the program has designed a component which is often overlooked in today's programming. This vital component lies within the independent living area.

Independent Living Skills Training

As noted earlier, from the onset of this program, an independent living specialist works with the hearing impaired population. After their initial training in money management, first aid, etc., the specialist meets with the students on a regular basis to insure that this period of transition is being mastered. Financial problems, roommate disputes, and social difficulties are turned into learning experiences. All of those non-educational influences which impact on the student's education are dealt with. Every effort is made to resolve those difficulties so the student can pour his or her energies into their educational classes. The philosophy of the program states that those situations occuring outside of the classroom have exceptional merit and strategies are designed to incorporate them into learning experiences.

Personnel

It goes without saying that the quality of a program is reflective of the staff who are involved in it. In order to insure a successful program, faculty and staff, outside the field of deafness must receive orientation and training specific to the field. Faculty and staff

handbooks are distributed and an open line of communication must remain between program personnel and college faculty and staff members.

In-service training is provided on an on-going basis. Faculty need to be kept abreast of trends in technology and update teaching strategies. By providing the faculty with current information and being receptive to their needs the overall program is enhanced.

The Student Population

Before concluding this section on the characteristics of a quality mainstreamed program, one must examine the student population. One can establish a program of excellence, but this alone will not insure the success of it.

Two factors play an important part in this endeavor: the hearing population and the hearing-impaired population. The hearing student body must be able to interact comfortably with this disability group so they can become incorporated in classroom activities and extracurricular events. They must grow to focus on the "abilities" of the "disability" thus enabling the deaf individual access into sports, student government associations, clubs and social functions.

The hearing-impaired population must first be large enough in nature to provide a diverse group within their own subculture. Second, they must be students who can learn to be comfortable in their hearing environment so they can participate full in their college experience. Finally, they must be able to accept their disability and want to receive training to learn strategies which will enable them to function freely and independently in today's society.

Conclusion

Hearing-impaired students can be successfully mainstreamed into small, rural junior colleges. The geographic location coupled with the student body and trained professionals can afford the student an environment which fosters success. By utilizing community resources and personnel, and developing a two way channel of communication between the program and area businesses the students lives are enhanced.

When establishing a program of this nature one must be willing to invest in the education and the growth of the total individual. Programs which focus solely on the educational training fall short of enabling the deaf individual to reach his full capacity. By emphasizing independent living skills and employability skills these individuals can make the transition into today's society more smoothly.

It is a known fact that education parallels employment possibilities for all individuals. The positive effect of post-secondary training on the professional lives of deaf adults is also indisputable. (Welsh & Walker, 1988.)

> Deaf adults with degrees fare much better in the work force than do high school graduates in a number of ways. First their employment rates are substantially

> lower...those with sub-Bachelor degrees reduce their rate by more than 60 percent, and holders of Bachelors degrees reduce their rate by nearly 90 percent...Second their socioeconomic status is affected... and third they earn significantly higher wages over the course of a lifetime. Sub-Bachelor graduates increase their weekly wages by 47 percent over those of high school graduates; Bachelor degree recipients increase theirs by a dramatic 116 percent. (pp. 19-20.)

In order to prepare these students for the world of work quality programs must be established, the hearing population must be made aware of their abilities and training, and the hearing-impaired individual must become aware of his rights and responsibilities in securing training and employment. By providing comprehensive programs of this nature, the terms "underemployed" and "unemployed" will be used less frequently when identifying the hearing-impaired population.